



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

In re Application of:

RAYMOND ZAPPE

: February 27, 2004

Serial number 10/077,346

: Group Art unit 3612

Filed 02/14/02

: Examiner HILARY L. GUTMAN

For: LINER APPARATUS AND METHOD OF MAKING A LINER

REQUEST FOR REINSTATEMENT OF APPEAL

AND

TRANSMITTAL LETTER FOR SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEF

HON. COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS

PO BOX 1450

ALEXANDRIA VA 22313-1450

Sir:

Applicant RAYMOND ZAPPE hereby requests the reinstatement of the appeal previously filed in the above identified application.

Accompanying this request are the required three copies of a supplemental brief.

Respectfully submitted,

RAYMOND ZAPPE, applicant

By:



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In re Application of:

RAYMOND ZAPPE : February 27, 2004
Serial No. 10/077,346 : Group Art Unit 3612
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For: LINER APPARATUS AND METHOD OF MAKING A LINER

SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEF FOR APPELLANT

Hon. Commissioner for Patents

PO Box 1450

Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

This Brief is filed pursuant to the provisions of 37 C.F.R. 1.192 and M.P.E.P. 1206 and 1208.02.

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REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

Applicant is the real party in interest.

RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There are no related appeals or interferences. However, this Supplemental Brief is filed upon the reinstatement of the original appeal. Prosecution was reopened following the filing of the Appeal Brief.

STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1 - 27, are pending in this application.

Claims 1 - 20 are method claims and have been withdrawn from consideration by way of an election without traverse following a restriction requirement. Those claims will be cancelled in due course and will be included in a divisional application.

Claims 21 - 27 are the only claims under consideration in this appeal.

Claim 21 is an independent claim and claims 22 - 27 are dependent claims. All of the seven claims under consideration have been finally rejected.

STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

An Amendment A was filed, amending independent claim 21 and making some corrections to the specification.

An Amendment B was filed subsequent to the original Final Rejection. The purpose of the Amendment B was to rewrite the Abstract of The Disclosure in response to the Examiner's objection to certain terminology. No claims were amended. It is believed that Amendment B was entered, although there is a question about the receipt of the Amendment. The Amendment was faxed and has been refaxed with appropriate documents.

Amendment C was filed after prosecution was reopened by the Examiner. Three paragraphs were amended in Amendment C. No claims were amended. Amendment C was entered. The purpose of Amendment C was to correct informalities noted by the Examiner and to hopefully clarify the "relatively flexible" and "relatively inflexible" terms objected to by the Examiner.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention comprises a three or four layered bed liner for a truck. This is best shown in Fig. 4, but may also be understood from the method steps illustrated in Figs.

1, 2, and 3. The bed liner includes a base coat 80, a patterned coat 82 disposed on and secured to the base coat 80, and a clear top coat 84 disposed on and secured to the patterned coat 82. The clear top coat 84 allows the patterned coat 82 to be viewed. The base coat may be a foam backing coat, as shown in Fig. 3. A fourth clear layer may be added if desired. The fourth clear layer is illustrated in Fig. 2.

Methods of making the liner, illustrated in Figs. 1, 2, and 3, and as defined in claims 1 - 20, are not under consideration in this Appeal, as indicated previously in the Status of the Claims portion of this Brief.

ISSUES

The following issues are presented in this Appeal:

1. Whether claims 25 -26 are indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, due to the inclusion of the terms “relatively flexible” and “relatively inflexible.”
2. Whether claims 21 - 22 and 25 - 26 are patentable over U.S. Patent 6,103,390 (Kamiya et al), hereinafter Kamiya ‘390, under 35 U.S.C. §102(b).
3. Whether claims 23 - 24 are patentable over Kamiya ‘390 in view of U.S. Patent 4,098,184 (Okada et al), hereinafter Okada ‘184 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).
4. Whether claim 27 is patentable over Kamiya ‘390 in view of Kamiya ‘390 in view U.S. Patent 6,350,509 (Sada et al), hereinafter Sada ‘509 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

GROUPING OF CLAIMS FOR EACH GROUND OF REJECTION

- (a) Claims 25 - 26: Rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112.
- (b) Claims 21, 22, 25, 26: Rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Kamiya '390.
- (c) Claims 23 and 24: Rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kamiya '390 in view of Kamiya '390 in view of Okada '184.
- (d) Claim 27: Rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kamiya '390 in view of Sada '509.

ARGUMENTS

(a)

The crux of the issue under 35 U.S.C. §112 is whether the terms “relatively flexible” and “relatively inflexible” are indefinite or, when taken in the context in which they are used, are definite and accordingly appropriate. According to the MPEP, the acceptability of the claim language depends on whether one of ordinary skill in the art would understand what is claimed in light of the specification. In other words, whether one of ordinary skill in the art would be apprised of the scope of the claim. MPEP §2173.05(b).

Paragraph 0049 was amended in Amendment C to clarify the language of claims 25 and 26. The language of paragraph 0049 states that the various coats may flex easily or they

may not flex easily. It is respectfully submitted that a person of ordinary skill in bed liners would be able to understand the terms without any problem or question. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the 23 U.S.C. §112 rejection is not well taken and should be withdrawn.

(b)

The prior art rejection is based primarily on the Kamiya '390 patent. The Kamiya '390 patent is for a multilayer medallion or decorative article. It has nothing to do with the subject matter of the present application. In the first place, would a person of ordinary skill in the bed liner art look to a medallion for ideas about bed liner elements? The answer is a resounding "NO."

In the second place, independent claim 21 calls for three layers of materials, a base layer, a patterned layer on the base layer, and a clear layer through which the patterned layer may be observed. Kamiya '390 does not have those three layers arranged in the same manner as specified in claim 21.

Under 32 U.S.C. §102(b), every element of the claimed invention must be identically shown in a single reference, and these elements must be arranged as in the claim under review. In re Bond, 910 F.2d 831, 15 U.S.P.Q.2d 1566 (Fed. Cir. 1990). Does the medallion of the Kamiya '390 patent have the same structure as in independent claim 21? Again, a resounding "NO."

The Kamiya ‘390 patent comprises a three inch by two inch medallion or decorative article for a vehicle. The Kamiya ‘390 structure includes a bottom release layer 8 and a double sided adhesive layer 5A secured to the release layer. Then there is a base layer 4 secured to the double sided adhesive layer 5A. On top of the release layer is a bottom adhesive coating 5, a protective coating 6, a glossy metal thin film layer 3, a resin film 2, a color coating 9 on the glossy metal thin film layer, and a clear coating 10 on the glossy thin film layer 3 and the color coating 9.

The structure of Kamiya ‘390 does not include the elements of claim 21 arranged in the same structural manner. The medallion has a total of nine layers, including a color coating 9 which is discontinuous and is not a separate layer, but is merely a part of a layer. The Kamiya ‘390 structure is not a proper reference against the structure defined in claim 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

The last statement in the next preceding paragraph ignores the fact that there is a world of difference between a medallion and a bed liner. When one takes into consideration the art of truck bed liners, Kamiya ‘390 is even farther afield.

If one ignores the fact of the nine layers in the Kamiya ‘390 structure, one still may not read the Kamiya ‘390 structure on the three layers of claim 21. Claim 21 specifies a first base layer, a patterned second layer on the base layer, and a clear third layer on the patterned layer. Kamiya ‘390 does not have those three layers arranged in that manner!

To read Kamiya '390 on claim 21 one would have to say that layers 8, 5A, 4, 5, and 6 were the equivalent of the base layer of claim 21. Then one would have to say that layers 3, 2, and 9 were the equivalent of the patterned layer of claim 21. Finally, one would have to say that the clear coating 10 was the equivalent of the clear coating of claim 21. The problem with the clear coating 10 of Kamiya '390 is that claim 21 specifies that the top clear layer is on the patterned second layer, while the Kamiya '390 clear coating 10 is on both the color coating 9 and the resin film layer 2. Again, under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) the Kamiya '390 structure fails.

With respect to the rejection of claim 22, the Examiner contends that "an elastic sheet such as polyurethane resin" may be considered as foam. This contention is respectfully traversed. The terms "foam" and "elastic resin sheet such as polyurethane resin" are not synonymous. However, again, with claim 21 allowable, claim 22 is also allowable.

(c)

The above discussion of the Kamiya '390 patent should put an end to the present issue because claims 22 - 27 are all dependent from claim 21. Accordingly, it follows that if claim 21 is allowable, claims 22 - 27 are also allowable. However, some discussion may be appropriate for the Okada '184 patent and the Sada '509 patent.

Okada'184 deals with printing on a curved surface. An image to be transferred is placed on a flexible carrier 7 and secured to a frame 8. The image is transferred to the carrier

7 from a screen 10. The frame 8 is then placed beneath a body 1. The body 1 includes an air tight chamber 2 and the chamber 2 has a flexible membrane 3 disposed above the frame 8 and the flexible carrier 7. Pressure is added into the chamber 2 to move the membrane 3 downwards onto the carrier 7 to transfer the image to a desired object 15.

The Okada '184 patent has absolutely NOTHING to do with the structure recited in claims 23 and 24. Claim 23 adds the limitation of a polychromatic patterned layer, and claim 24 adds the limitation of a monochromatic patterned layer. Okada '184 discloses a flexible printing transfer element, which has nothing to do with the patterned layer of the present invention. The Okada '184 patent is completely inapposite to both the present invention and to the Kamiya '390 structure. There is certainly no basis for combining Okada the '184 and the Kamiya '390 patents!

(d)

The Sada '509 patent is similarly inapposite to the present invention and to Kamiya '390. Sada '509 concerns the painting of cars with different types of paint to provide different hues which vary according to the viewing angle. That is, multiple layers of paint are sprayed on a vehicle to produce different hues when the vehicle is viewed from different angles. Such art has nothing to do with claim 27, which adds to claim 21 the limitation of a fourth clear layer. Moreover, and once again, the combination of Sada '509 to the Kamiya

‘390 patent is clearly improper, aside from the fact the neither of them even suggest in any way that a bed liner may include the limitations found in claims 21 and 27.

(General)

The criterion of section 103 is not whether the differences from the prior art are simple enhancements, but whether it would have been obvious to make the claimed structure.

Continental Can Company U.S.A., Inc. v. Monsanto Co., 948 F.2d 1264, 20 U.S.P.Q.2d 1746 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

The Examiner bears the burden of showing that the prior art provides some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to make the particular combination or rearrangement of parts. See In Re Raynes, 7 F.2d 1037, 28 U.S.P.Q.2d 1630 (Fed. Cir. 1993). This the Examiner has failed to do with respect to the cited art.

Nothing in Kamiya ‘390 by itself, or in combination with the other two patents combined by the Examiner, either teaches or suggests the simple elements set forth in independent claim 21 and dependent claims 22 - 27. This is so even if one ignores the fact that the combinations are improper in the first place.

Finally, the Examiner has ignored the preamble limitation of “A bed liner for a vehicle.” While such a preamble states the intended purpose for the claimed article, the intended use also structurally differentiates the claimed article from the cited art. In other words, the medallion or ornamental article of Kamiya ‘390 could not be used for a vehicle’s

bed liner. Structurally, there is a vast difference between a bed liner for a vehicle and an ornamental article or medallion. Accordingly, the Examiner is in error in completely disregarding the preamble. See MPEP §2111.02, and cases cited. Again - the claims under consideration define over the cited art and are patentable.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons given above, it is respectfully submitted that the present claims under consideration, namely claims 21 - 27, define over the prior art and are nonobvious.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX

1. A method of making a liner for the cargo area of a vehicle comprising the steps of:

providing a mold;
spraying a base coat on the mold;
spraying a patterned coat on the first coating; and
spraying a clear coat on the patterned coat.

2. The method of claim 1 in which the provided mold is a female mold.
3. The method of claim 1 in which the provided mold is a male mold.
4. The method of claim 1 which further includes the step of spraying a release agent on the mold before spraying the base coat.
5. The method of claim 1 which further includes the step of curing each coat after a coat is sprayed.

6. A method of making a liner comprising the steps of:
providing a mold;
spraying a first coat on the mold;
spraying a patterned coat on the first coat; and
spraying a third coat on the patterned coat.

7. The method of claim 6 in which the provided mold is a female mold, and the first coat is a base coat, and the third coat is a clear coat.

8. The method of claim 6 in which the provided mold is a male mold, and the first coat is a clear coat, and the third coat is a base coat.

9. The method of claim 6 in which the first coat includes the step of applying a release agent to the mold prior to spraying the first coat.

10. The method of claim 9 which further includes the step of curing each coat after spraying a coat.

11. A method of making a multilayer element having a patterned layer and a clear layer over the patterned layer comprising the steps of:

providing a first mold;

providing a first coat on the mold;

providing a patterned second coat on the first coat;

providing a third coat on the patterned second coat; and

curing each coat prior to providing the next coat.

12. The method of claim 11 in which the first mold is a male mold, and the first coat is a clear coat.

13. The method of claim 11 in which the first mold is a female mold, and the third coat is a clear coat.

14. The method of claim 11 in which the first coat is sprayed on the mold.

15. The method of claim 14 in which the first coat is a base coat.

16. The method of claim 11 in which the step of providing a third coat comprises providing a film coat.

17. The method of claim 16 which further includes the step of providing a second mold, and the first mold is a lower, female, mold, and the second mold is an upper mold.

18. The method of claim 17 which further includes the step of providing heat to heat the film coat to allow the film coat to stretch.

19. The method of claim 18 which further includes the step of providing a ram in the upper mold to provide pressure on the film coat to move the film coat against the second coat.

20. The method of claim 18 which further includes the step of providing pressure in the upper mold to provide pressure on the film coat to move the film coat against the second coat.

21. A bed liner for a vehicle comprising in combination:
a first base layer;
a patterned second layer secured to the first base layer; and
a clear third layer secured to the patterned layer for permitting the patterned layer to be viewed.

22. The liner of claim 21 in which the base layer is a foam layer.
23. The liner of claim 21 in which the patterned layer is polychromatic.
24. The liner of claim 21 in which the patterned layer is monochromatic.
25. The liner of claim 21 in which the liner is relatively flexible.
26. The liner of claim 21 in which the liner is relatively inflexible.
27. The liner of claim 21 which includes a clear fourth layer on the clear third layer.